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THE CASE OF PURPOSE AGAINST FATE IN HISTORY

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Whatever may be true physically, mentally there must be a bit of the Irish character in us all. Like the Irishman delighting in a brawl or mix-up, we are all of us given to thinking in terms of some confusing opposition. Our serious intellectual problems have to do with good and evil, truth and error, reality and unreality, life and death, God and man; and the Hibernian nature of our thinking is only the more evident because in the case of any two things in opposition, whatever other question we may strive to answer, we are always at special pains to decide and are never able finally to decide which is which. Good and evil, life and death, reality and unreality are possibly not so easily mistaken as things outwardly less unlike or less a match for each other, but even they may be seen as like at least as twins. Are they not always born in our thought together? And unlike as they may seem, are we not constantly taking them for each other? In so many, many ways each term of any pair, no matter how real the opposition be, is found to have some share in the meaning or character of that which appears to stand against it; as when, for example, the preachers or the biologists find life in death or one's mistakes appear as stepping-stones after all to improvement, or one's virtues as also one's vices, or when the real patriot is seen to be he who criticizes and even assails the generally accepted policies of his country, or the real devotee in religion to be he who sets truth above dogma and fears not to tear down or to let fall what the discovered truth refuses to support. And many, if not all, of our deepest insights can have no utterance save in paradox. Byron has expressed this mingling of things opposed in these words:

And after all what is a lie? 'Tis but
The truth in masquerade, and I defy
Historians, heroes, lawyers, priests, to put
A fact without some leaven of a lie.

Literature of every sort has never ceased, whether seriously or humorously, tragically or comically, with emotional appreciation or with philosophical understanding—which to the lay mind often seems little if any better than logical intrigue—to dwell on the certain mixing for good or ill of things that are opposed. Thought, like politics, has always made strange bedfellows.

The things opposed, then, must truly be hopelessly involved in each other. Opposition is only a great although a subtle mixer. And, as this is true in general, so in particular the subjects of discussion in the present essay, purpose and fate, as representing what determines human conduct and the large writing of human conduct, human history, can be no exception to the rule. Thus, to plunge *in medias res* and show at once how hopelessly mixed purpose and fate are and with such showing to indicate at least in a preliminary way what is to be the contention here, I suggest the following. Purposive action, as *very commonly understood*, whether written small in ordinary individual life or large in general life, is only action made the victim of some antecedent plan. What it is to be victim to some plan, tyrannical and unswerving, all men know quite well, perhaps too well. No name, however, as I would have the reader fully appreciate, better fits the victimizing plan or—confessedly—is more rarely applied to it than fate. Under it, action, real action, has lost any claim to being purposive. You have a friend who never changes his mind and by ordinary estimates he is indeed a man of purpose, even of firm and perhaps noble purpose, but to deeper appreciation he and his life are bound by nothing less than relentless fate. Political parties, nations, whole civilizations, as well as individuals, have perished simply through the fate of their own firm and even noble purposes. Their passing, it is true, may have its glory and in the heroic sacrifices count deeply for the worth of life. This, however, is not the present point. The present point is simply that their asserted purposes have been as fatal or fatalistic as all those external conditions of force and circumstance which are commonly called so.

Supposed purpose, then, may be only disguised fate or, to use Byron's phrase, fate in masquerade. On the other hand, fate is also a disguise. True, as appears, man often proposes and an objective, non-human if not inhuman fate disposes, putting at nought the accepted human purposes and leaving to man only the conceit of having meant and willed well. But action so fated and so undone is after all—as who does not know?—only action being educated, not to any mere external compulsion imposed upon it by some external power—as if forsooth an alien power ever could compel anything!—but to its own fuller and deeper meaning. Instead, therefore, of being controlled by an external fate, it is or at least it may be really purposive, being purposive in just the sense of coming to accord with its truer meaning. So a child learns to walk; so a nation grows into power and prosperity and civilization; fatefully—purposively.

Again, at risk possibly of seeming merely to repeat, how sure it is that no antecedent purpose of any action can ever possibly represent its whole purpose, its fullest meaning. No recognized purpose can ever be the large and vital purpose of any act. If it could, there were no real action. The recognized and antecedent purpose, therefore, if taken for the complete purpose, in just so far must, as has been said, victimize the agent. Neither the agent nor others looking on should ever measure action so narrowly. But how sure it is also, the foregoing being so true, that all definitely and antecedently purposed action must constantly confront things that, in the first place, resist its recognized and perhaps formulated intent and, in the second place, even as they prove effective, bring it only to itself, to better understanding of itself. Who has not said in presence of things that have come into his life apparently quite without his doing and certainly without his conscious volition: "After all, I might have foreseen these things. These things, too, although unforeseen and unintended, really do show what my life, even my own inner life, deeply and truly is. They do but disclose what the purpose of my life not merely is now become, but also really was"? Somehow, personally or racially, in individual conduct or in history, it is the part of human life,

indeed of all real life or action, even to intend the unintended and so to be ready to equate or identify opposing fate with inner purpose.

So already we have something of a case for purpose against fate in human life and history. The case, it is true, is for a fate that educates purpose and it is against purpose itself in the sense of any merely antecedent plan, so that many may think that a very large price has been paid for only slight return. The price, however, I am sure, will prove in the end an altogether justified expense. But, before going farther with the argument, it is well quite definitely to enlarge and at the same time to deepen the problem under discussion. So far, although both in the title and in occasional references the fact has been kept in mind that human life in its general history rather than in any single person's experience is the primary interest of this essay, still the impressions given have probably been psychological or individualistic rather than historical. Serious and vital as the problem of purpose against fate is, if approached only from the standpoint of ordinary individuals, it becomes of course indescribably more serious and more vital as soon as, turning to history, one takes direct and special thought of the rise and fall of nations or races, considering the forces that make and preserve institutions and civilizations and the forces—are these by any possibility the same?—that also attack and destroy them. To the historian the problem gets dimensions and significance that tax to the utmost both the reason and the imagination. Races develop their civilization and these are truly marvelous witnesses to human purpose and achievement, but as we follow them from century to century and observe their inevitable course, as we see how necessarily conservative the institutions are and at the end how tragically disastrous the conservatism is, we have to forget the purpose that first appeared and the achievement too and to think only of a dire fate. The body of institutions that has made the civilization, involving large areas of the earth's surface and unnumbered peoples and many centuries, affords but a notable and impressive example of what has been here called a victimizing plan, a fateful purpose. And

yet, also, the disaster that comes with grim certainty, however seemingly the result of a merciless fate, that works at once through the conservatism and through the opposing forces without, is always found to be more than fate or disaster and quite different. With the fall, so sure to follow the rise of a civilization, as the monuments crumble and even whole cities are buried, the deepening experience of the people, often if not always aided by a great leader who seems to have sprung from Nature rather than from civilization, to have been born, not made, is able to interpret the change, even when at its worst, as fulfillment of the past and positive freedom and opportunity for the present; as being after all what the falling civilization had really meant; in short as still consistent with human purpose, only revealing, as if from between the lines of the old order, a wider and fuller purpose than was before recognized. Read the fatalistic literature that usually if not always marks the closing years of an institution or a civilization, and then as time goes on watch how slowly but surely the paradox comes to get, not merely formal utterance, but also practical expression, perhaps in the teaching and above all in the character of some martyred prophet, that the seeming fate is only life's real purpose, nay, that even the death itself is real life. In the real purpose of all life there is always a loyalty to the spirit, as opposed to the letter, and the spirit knows no conflict with fate.

History thus makes the problem of purpose against fate large and deep. Also, apart from other ways, in its prophets or martyrs, in the followers of the spirit, it seems to provide important evidence for a solution of the problem, suggesting anew, in a way that has its peculiarly forceful appeal, that seeming purpose, fixed and antecedent, is only a fateful plan victimizing human action, and that seeming fate, name for all that opposes the accepted and conservative purposes of action, is only some larger demand which, although outside those purposes, is not and cannot be outside the action itself and which, as it educates the action, is recognized and appropriated by it.

Now, however, with the magnitude of the problem in clear view and with the preliminary indication that has been given of

the intended solution, I wish to change somewhat the point of view. Instead of discussing purposes I would discuss ideals and expectations, and I must hope that my readers in general and particularly the historians will not find the following paragraphs too hopelessly philosophical for their consumption. Whether we may read our history as truly purposive or as only blindly fateful depends on the sort of idealists we are, that is, on the kind of expectations with which we view any sequence of events. Naturally any ideal, whose realization is looked forward to, and the antecedent purpose introducing or initiating the sequence of events by which the ideal is to be realized, must be very closely related factors of interest or consciousness. In certain respects they are even identical. But, however close their relationship, even if no real difference between them should be found, still the difference in standpoint, which they do imply, is a useful difference.

So, as to ideals or expectations, most people, I am disposed to believe, know only one sort of idealism, representing naturally the most common type of expectation. This prevailing idealism, now to be examined here at considerable length, is at once abstract and perfectionistic—at least in its outer form. Thus it looks forward to the realization of some ideal that—so goes the claim—really lies outside of the present actual life and all so-called sordid or at least quite unideal affairs and that in some way is given to life from without or from “above.” Its ideal, in short, has or is said or presumed to have the character of an other-world visitor and, at least in relation to the changes of the life that is here manifest and earthly and human and “practical,” is pure and as fixed and as static in character as pure, representing some perfection as a passive being or condition, a sublimated *status in quo*, such as, for example, perfect peace, a redeemed humanity, government without disobedience, a universal religion, and so on. As to the expected realization, too, nothing is more pertinent, more indicative of the abstraction and the static perfectionism, than the old story of the travelers on the highway, whose inquiries always found them at the same distance from their destination and who took comfort among

themselves in these words: "The blessed saints be praised! We're at least keeping even." Creatures of a moving, changing world, such as this world is, and particularly as any history must find it, can never possibly either feel that they have realized or be said by others, interpreting their career, to have realized the fixed ideal, the static perfection of another world. They may easily "keep even" with it. This, however, only means that they must always be as far from it as at the start and that their pursuit of it is only with fine sentiments and unseeing hopes and with actions which, being necessarily formal and lifeless, can be only so much ritual. Piously, then, they may walk and walk and walk, but never in character or knowledge can they make any real progress toward the ideal—that lies so fixedly and eternally removed. And when at last they seem to have arrived, their arrival is simply because the appointed time has passed and because circumstances have brought it about and because they have been willing or have assumed a willingness to die to what they were—at the end of their always lifeless pursuit appropriately dying and entering into another world. Their activity made quite mechanical by an ideal so foreign to it, has simply found its splendid fulfilment and reward in a final rest!

With such meaning, then, the common type of idealism is abstract and perfectionistic and what history, whether in its actual making or in the view of the student who would interpret the process of its making, must seem to be under such an idealism needs hardly to be said. A lifeless progress, its events as only so many material facts, episodes, persons, or peoples, to a futile because unnatural goal, the end having no contact with the means to its attainment! A series, doubtless, with its last term, but in the series no real movement and in the last term only a cataclysm!

Furthermore, this abstract and perfectionistic idealism, as partially indicated already, has the unavoidable effect of imputing to all those things which are incident to the pursuit of the ideal the character of impertinence and also even of unsympathetic, when not brutal, interference and violence. The ideal, in other words, is realized in spite of those incidents, or only

by overcoming them, not because of them or not through the expression of anything native to them. Arrival being the sole interest of the journey, the scenery and the experiences of all sorts *en route* can have no part in the attainment and must be at worst interference and resistance, and at best the discipline of the kind that is said to chasten. Thus the present natural world, which simply constitutes the scenery and the experiences of the one great journey, that includes all others, to the ideal, is a world of resistance, not of positive help, and if its force or its law ever determine the course of man's history, diverting him from his declared goal, it gets character as hard fate, hostile and blind to human interest. So the other-world ideal of perfectionism and the fixed antecedent purpose meet in this way, both giving rise to the experience and to the ideal of external fate. Man may will or by the historian or biographer be regarded as willing to realize, to arrive at, certain ideals, certain abstract, unworldly perfections, just as before we saw that he might act under some original and fixed plan or purpose, but an insistent worldliness, a brutal physical nature, must ever qualify his success or even defeat him, and he can have or can be seen as having no choice, his ideal not being realized or his purpose being undone, but to ask plaintively that his good will be taken for the deed, his vain but earnest will for Nature's or Fate's unsanctified performance. Again, let life and its history be read through the abstract ideal or the antecedent plan, and an unholy materialism, controlling both life and the interpretation of it, must stand out as a reproach to the asserted idealism. Side by side with a "good will" Fate always looms very large. Many are the excellent men, vigorous and really human, who have been lifted violently out of their life and their times, or say out of their vital and vigorous humanity, by the historian or the biographer, simply because his idealism required a separation of life and its ideal or of positive activity and the human will accompanying the activity. Such men, it is true, have always had their earthly characters and entanglements, but these, when recognized at all, have been attached, not to their wills but to their "unreal selves." As if anything that a man does must not bear its witness to what he really is!

But now, very fortunately and, I think, as with all theories, this theory of abstract idealism with its perfectionistic expectation and its human beings of good will and of real and unreal selves has never lived up to its own creed. Perhaps its real intent has ever been more comprehensive and more loyal to real life than its formulation could possibly be. But, in any case, instead of holding loyally to the notion that the ideal really belongs to another world and so should enter this, or man's experience of this, from without, it has in practice refused to wait for its other-world ideal to arrive and make itself known, and has simply selected something of the present world and in feeling and imagination as well as with all the rites and honors of transfiguration has transferred this to its world of the ideal. Individual human beings, privileged classes in society, special or chosen tribes, the whole race of mankind, held so sacredly apart from other kingdoms of nature, racial and national conceits of all sorts, particular institutions and customs from the church down to some special industry claiming protection, peculiar attitudes of mind such as unreasoning faith or as the notion of science or of art "only for its own sake" or as so-called "good will"—already mentioned here and usually if not always synonymous with loyalty to some vested interest, certain phrases or phrases of human expression, and even certain parts and functions of the human body and certain animals—all these at one time and another have had their turns at the advantage and high distinction of abstractly idealistic translation and at being the objects of perfectionistic expectation, even to wearing for longer or shorter period the halo of the supernatural.

There is indeed no habit or institution, no fixed interest or formal condition of life, that, as it has been developed and consciously asserted and maintained, has failed to get some tint or color of the supernatural. Search mankind's long history, and nothing of importance in man's positive experience will be found not to have had its day or age out of this world in some service of the other. Even Christianity implies just this and likewise such isms as Americanism—in the feeling and confident assertion of many people—or as socialism really shows it, claiming as they do

a certain exaltation, a certain presumed independence of what is natural. The millenium has never been envisaged just in general, but always under the conditions of some chosen mode of life. So, in short, has the course of history ever been a sort of dreaming. Men have but dreamt the things of this world into another.

And contemplation of the dreaming with its idealization and transfiguration of all sorts of things has a deep fascination. It suggests a sunrise seen from a high mountain; the light spreading, the shadows changing, the mists lifting and clearing, and at last even the lowest and darkest places becoming touched with the new light. It recalls the fairy stories of one's childhood that told how the fairies went about and touched the flowers with their beautiful colors, neglecting none. The statement has sometimes been made, and made certainly with a basis of profound truth, that anything, whatever its special character or whatever even its apparent insignificance, may be treated at least theoretically as a first principle, as a term of classification and explanation for all that is. Are all things water or air or fire or earth? Are they, possibly, in view of modern discoveries, electricity? All things are or with some truth, since the truth must be quite democratic, may be—to a sufficiently deep understanding or a sufficiently inspired mind—any one of these or anything else you please. Deeply, theoretically, serious thought, not unlike monomania, need be no respecter of things. Is not any city or for that matter any smallest town a real hub of the universe? As the true, then, may be and has been thus democratic, giving now to this and now to that a primary and monarchical importance, so the ideal may be and in history certainly seems to have been democratic also. The ideal may belong, as the theory would have it, to another world, but the things of this world have shown a remarkable capacity for being ideal. In practice the ideal other world has been only this world taken piecemeal.

What humor, then, is here? Must abstract idealism confess to an illusion? And, the illusion admitted and the ideal world recognized as only a piecemeal translation of the real,

what new idealism and what new type of expectation will take the place of the old? In order to answer these questions it is necessary to consider carefully the source and motive of all idealistic regard, as follows.

In the first place, to return momentarily to the purposive view of action, an antecedent purpose, definitely present in consciousness, is always formed by existing conditions of custom and institution and—such in reality is the import of the purpose itself—these conditions, it is felt, must be preserved¹ and all things else made to conform to them. But, given such definite purpose, external resistance, as has been shown, is as sure as fate and when the resistance is felt the expected realization is thereupon made abstractly ideal or dependent on a life hereafter, where and when the fatal resistance will be absent. In short the resistance throws the purpose skyward or heavenward, the ideal other-world, except for an important qualification that will follow, having always been only a sublimated region for the reception and maintenance of obstructed human purposes. To speak with seeming flippancy and yet with intent of large meaning, collision and fatal resistance have constantly shocked men, as they have sought to carry out their specific purposes, to the seeing of stars. Struck by opposing fate they have seen stars—the heavenly stars being only their translated purposes. So is the other world made rather a translation of this than the independent source of the ideals of this.

But, secondly, in the present attempt to explain the regard of the idealist, man's purposes, when heaven-placed by a resisting and obstructing fate, lose their local and earthly form or setting and become general or spiritual—this being the important qualification that was promised. The translated purposes are indeed so many stars, elemental stars, flung out to their orbits in the firmament of human experience by some deep cosmic—or psychic?—process. The other world of the ideal, therefore, is not only, as has been said, this world taken piecemeal, but also this world taken elementally or seen through the glory that is

¹ Sometimes, it is true, they must be, not preserved but modified or even overthrown. In such instances, however, the asserted purposes only represent a loyalty to some newly developed mode of life, relatively unorganized perhaps, but not without some organization.

declared by its starry heavens. It is, too, not truly another world, *but this world as ideal*. An idealized thing is a thing "translated" and the translation has ever followed this formula: "Not the outer manifestation, but the essential principle; not the earthly object, but the star," and in view of this formula or of the ideal world as this world taken piecemeal *and elementally*, we can at least begin to see how the standpoint of the prevalent abstract idealism and perfectionism, under which, more or less consciously, so much history has been interpreted, must be modified.

Still, in the third place, it is important to avoid two dangers of serious misunderstanding. The first of these relates to the possible impression, from what has been said, of something derogatory attaching to the world of the ideal or to the act of idealization. Have not ideals been represented here as but so many defeated purposes? Unrealizable here in this world, thanks to the opposing fate, man's hopes would seem to be relegated to another, and accordingly confession of failure to be the source and motive of all idealization. This interpretation of the facts, however, is altogether too casual, for the process of relegation, so-called, transforms even while it transfers man's obstructed purposes, and to recognize the character of the transformation—from earthly objects to elements—is not merely to remove the suspicion of anything derogatory but also actually to make the motive of the ideal, not failure, but victory. A given purpose may in some sense be defeated and abandoned, but it is also idealized, and this means that the spirit of it, the primary essential intent, is still held in thought and will and, as of peculiar importance, that even the literal purpose as originally conceived and asserted cannot have been without some warrant. The spirit has ever given worth to the letter. Accordingly the experience of the ideal is truly one of victory. Can there ever be resistance or obstruction to the essential spirit of anything? Can even fate, however much it may oppose and impair the letter, ever withstand the spirit? The spirit, as has been said here, knows no conflict with fate.

So nothing derogatory was intended; on the contrary, the

intent was distinctly and positively appreciative. But, to turn now to the second danger, this, relating to the apparent isolation of the ideal, may not be dispelled so easily. Plainly abstract idealism and perfectionism must confess to an illusion. Their ideal world has proved to be not yonder or hereafter, but here and even now. In spite of all that has been said, however, in the way of showing the world of the ideal to be but the real world taken piecemeal and the real world taken elementally, the disposition will still be strong to isolate the ideal and to interpret life and history from the standpoint of its isolation. The actual seems so unideal! The stars although "here and now" are not of this earth! But on the contrary, at least if this recurrent analogy to the elemental stars be anything more than a pleasant figure, the actual as here and now is itself the ideal; not merely, it is true, in any single form or detail or to any partial view, not merely definitely and statically, but in the fulness of its present activity, in the vitality and the possibility of it, in the constant conflict of its loyalty at once to what is definite and at least seems fixed and to what is essential. Are not the stars, being elemental, also the hidden indwelling forces of the earth as well as the visible glory of the heavens? The prevailing idealism, then, needs to be, let me say, not for a single moment less idealistic but more so, finding the ideal here as well as yonder, and accordingly at the same time to be more realistic. The imagined aloofness of the ideal is only an illusion created by its intensity and immediacy, by its comprehensiveness and commanding presence.

And how can I say further what I would? Certainly expression is not easy. But what can a realistic idealism mean if not just what common sense is saying so often, namely, that the nearest and the realest things are often at once the most wonderful and the least appreciated? Is the clod upon which the foot of the idealistic dreamer rests, whose gaze is into the infinitudes of space and time, less wonderful or less inspiring than what he is gazing at? Is it any less truly a region of primary or elemental forces or of unmeasured distances or of marvelous possibilities? One difference, perhaps, is to be observed. The far and the

near are likely to differ in dynamic value, that is, in their demand for action, the elemental as here and now being rather a mode of motion than a constitution or a condition of being, or dynamically rather than statically primary and elemental, and as yonder instead of here being just the reverse of this in character. But such a difference would only make the realistic view even more idealistic than idealism itself. Nothing is so really idealistic as action.

Of course, as called to mind already, there is humor in a view that thus brings the ideal to earth, and one is led to think of those who go about looking everywhere for their glasses only to discover that the lost articles have been in place and in use all the time. Such disillusionment is always humorous, so that idealism become realistic and immediate cannot but laugh at its one-time abstraction and far perfectionistic vision. Moreover to catch the humor now will help the understanding. Also, catching the humor ourselves, we should expect to find that in history, when specifically men have lived through the experience of which for the most part the foregoing is only a general account, when in some concrete way they have suffered the discomfiture, first, of resistance and defeat for their plans or for their civilization, and then of the disillusionment of their subsequent idealistic dreaming, they have felt the humor too. We should, I say, expect this, and in fact history affords cases in which the feeling is seen to have been keen. A people identified with its particular civilization, when at last the inevitable conflict that can have only one outcome has set in between its civilization and nature, its human purpose and fate, has always been able and ready to laugh over its disappointment. In its midst there have indeed appeared very sober-minded men, serious even to mournful mien and tragic measures and distant unworldly vision, but even these men have often shown a rich humor, and also they have never been without contemporary fatalists and materialists who have been peculiarly prone to laughter. Is it possibly a spirit of bravado that thus leads a people, feeling the atmosphere of its life charged with pending disaster and downfall, to turn to humor and comedy? Certainly when a national literature has become

fatalistic, as in the case of the Greek drama, there has always been a large deposit of comedies and the spirit of comedy has seemed to get only more inordinate as the tragedy has deepened, that is, as even the hopes put in the distant future or the here-after have perforce been abandoned and the ideal has been, as in the end it always must be, identified even with the present and actual or natural. "When man is, death is not. When death is, man is not. So why fear death? Or why dream of the here-after? Eat, drink, and above all be merry." Such words, in part adapted from Epicurus, show the humor and the laughing bravado of a dying civilization. But also they show more than mere bravado, and the life of their time has always exhibited more. They show that human nature is still undaunted, as capable of stoic superiority as of laughter; the one capacity in truth being only an earnest of the other. They show a people in its comedy able to laugh at its own foibles, in its Epicureanism making laughter and pleasure its first demand on fate and so in its life as a whole ready or all but ready to abandon, not only its traditional purposes, become so small and inadequate as to be amusing, but also its far idealistic vision, and at the same time to accept even to the point of sanctioning and willing the new life and the larger life that has set in. Thus the comedians and the merry-makers are significantly the forerunners, if not the natural and appropriate contemporaries, of those, perhaps outwardly more heroic, whose mission it is, as great leaders and reformers, positively and directly to interpret the pending fate to be only an ideal or spiritual fulfilment of the people's original purposes.

Wherefore, if a nation's humor as it develops means what has been suggested, not only do we get a better understanding of what it is to life to find the ideal immediately in the real, but also we have, I think, an additional reason for preferring an idealism of the realistic type to an abstract idealism, and so for viewing the course of history accordingly. Real humor has such a fine insight and its evidence is therefore so convincing. It is brave. It is at once idealistic and realistic. It both has vision and assists present action. And so from its testimony, quite as much as from the other evidence that has been given, our

new idealism, instead of being abstract and perfectionistic, must supplant the old with something altogether different. To recall certain phases from earlier paragraphs, when regard is had to the ideal as elemental, our new idealism must be realistic and naturalistic and, when the ideal is seen as this world taken piecemeal, experimental. For such an idealism, too, facing reality as it does, there can be no external fate and, as for the results to history, consistently with it the historian must value life at any time as more than antecedent or merely instrumental to what is to come at some later time. At any time and place the life that is going on must always be more and be represented as more than just those visible instruments of historic person or institution with which so easily, being prejudiced by some assumed future goal, the historian has often identified it. In short the living present of any time is not merely "historic." It may, it is true, be separated into what is formally visible and what is invisible, and with this separation a distinction may be drawn between what is past, the dead past, present only in records and positive *vestigia* of all sorts, and the future, the unknown future, not formally present at all or present only as impulse or power or possibility and so not yet "historic." But history, getting its cue only from such a distinction, is manifestly artificial. The living present of any time cannot live and be so divided, and a history, accordingly, that would represent its life, its vital unity, cannot be content with what is thus either dead or not yet born.

But such a conclusion as this may appear quite meaningless, if not positively absurd. Quietly but firmly I may be reminded that history is history, not present living of whatever time. The future, I am told, is hardly a field of historic interest, while the past that does concern history truly is past distinctly and characteristically. Yet surely there is another than the dead past and also, although history may deny all concern with the future, because it is unborn, still any historical sequence, any series of events in time does and must imply a future and imply, too, something about the future. The real future, then, is never merely hereafter nor is the past merely gone before, and the history that would be true would appear to need to revive the past at least a

little, instead of killing it quite dead, and to have in mind, not a wholly unborn future, but the always implicit or immanent future; for, again, any real and living present, whatever its date, comprehends both past and future in a vital unity. And all of this, I think, amounts only to saying that our realistic idealism, for which fate can be no opponent of purpose or for which the ideal must be as present as it is real, demands that the historian include among his facts or data for any period which he studies and reports an over-historical or a super-historical factor, a living something giving to the period an eternal or temporally superior character, and also recognize and duly appreciate this factor in its historical superiority. Really all historians do include something over-historical, but many fail to recognize and appreciate what they have. Our realistic idealism demands the appreciation. History is like a journey, and the true goal of any journey should always comprise and be interpreted as comprising the journeying, whatever else may belong to it—the journeying and all its manifold acts and experiences. Steps and stations and distant goals are historical, but in the journeying there is also that which is over-historical.

Now in several striking ways history may be seen to imply the required over-historical factor or to imply the constant immediacy of the ideal here insisted upon. An abstract idealism, it is true, may make one quite blind to any such thing. Thus, once more, the abstract idealist, as so much that has been said here has indicated, can see history as only the forward progression according to some fixed purpose toward some impossible perfection. If the purpose fail, as in time it must, another like it takes its place and the forward progression is repeated with its unavoidable conflict between the asserted purpose and an outside fate and with its requirement of a sacrifice of the unideal present life to the abstract future. Moreover, say what one will, the facts of history do seem to show such fixed progression to distant goals and in general to accord with the abstractly idealistic view. They accord, however, just because naturally and properly enough histories are selective or piecemeal and analytical and so are written of particular things interesting at

the time in some peculiar way. They are written of political England, of Roman or Protestant Christianity, of modern commerce, of philosophical materialism, of civilized man, of organic life, and so on. And being so written, instead of being directly histories of real life, or of all life, they have been held each to its peculiar end or interest, about which in a gradual realization, when not also in a gradual decline, to arrange the various pertaining changes or events of all sorts. But such abstract histories, whatever their appropriateness or whatever their accord not so much with the facts as with their facts, or whatever their interest in and to the consciousness of their times, are superficial and partial and in just so far artificial very much as all specialism is artificial. They are not whole histories. They do not and cannot see the whole of life at any time. They may or must in spite of themselves include something representative of wholeness, but they blind themselves to this even when it is very near at hand.

So, to repeat, in several ways history should be seen to imply an over-historical factor or the constantly immediate ideal—either of these two keeping it whole—and the several ways referred to, three in particular, are as follows: First, history is really superior to any single direction; whatever it may be to a narrow and partial view, in respect to the whole life of any time or any period it is not unilinear. Second, it has expression in a conflict that is at once perennial and with special meaning whatever the victories or the defeat, always equal or drawn, the parties to the conflict being, for example, pleasure and pain, good and evil, law and lawlessness, knowledge and ignorance, wealth and poverty, man and nature, life and death, or purpose and fate, and the issue in any of these cases always remaining a real issue. And, third no period of history is ever without personal individuals, some small and commonplace, some great, but all as persons over-historical and with the perennial conflicts and the independence of single direction bearing witness to the living presence of the ideal as well as to wholeness of life at any time. These three marks of the special character of history here insisted upon I would consider in order, concluding this essay with a brief reference to each.

As to direction the course of life viewed partially may or even must appear unilinear, the particular alignment depending obviously on the selected and abstracted interest under which the various facts are approached. But life itself, if I may so speak, at any time is a sphere, not any single line, and anything making it seem linear or unilinear is abstract and can have value and meaning only as so much analysis or only as experiment has value and meaning. There is, perhaps, in the facts the same case against a unilinear history that there is against a geocentric or a heliocentric or in any respect a unicentric astronomy. An infinite solar system, although centric, can have no set single center. A comprehensive history can have no one goal, no one direction. It may or even must be always directional, that is, capable of appearing to bear now toward one selected end and now toward another; but no one direction is *the* direction. Thus we may be able, consistently with manifest facts, to find and write a long history under the standpoint of some one direction, that is, a long history of anything we may choose, but sooner or later, as is so often said, any such history has to be rewritten, and there is no rewriting that does not involve some change in the direction. And even were this source of variation negligible, there would still be the disturbing fact that the world must have as many different histories, that is as many different directions, as it has different things. In short *the* direction of history must be so whole or, as I like to say, so spiritual, so superdirectional or transcendental, that it holds an infinity of divergent cases or directions. *The* direction of history, however paradoxically, must be plural, not single. Indeed in respect to anything whatever, personality or righteousness or sovereignty or deity or historical direction, *the* cannot be *a*; *the* must always be many, not one. Even *human* history, although in life and thought a richly significant analysis and experiment, cannot be *the* history or whole history.

But, secondly, closely related to the linear but not unilinear, directional but not singly directional character of whole history, there is the perennial character of all the conflicts of history. Quite beyond any peradventure history has its triumphs of life over death, of knowledge over ignorance, of government over

lawlessness, and so on, and in view of these triumphs one might conclude that its trend was toward some determinate goal, describable at least in such a general term as life or knowledge or as pleasure or goodness, or—after Spencer—as perfect adaptation. But alas! no triumph ever takes place without a speedy renewal of the old conflict. This story, too, is such an old one that rehearsal of it can hardly be called for here. Moreover, it has recently been told in an interesting way by W. Benett in a book² bearing the suggestive title *The Ethical Aspects of Evolution Regarded as a Parallel Growth of Opposite Tendencies*. As life is too deep and too large for any one goal, so also it is too deep and too large for any final triumph. Nothing that is regarded worthy in life is ever without opposition, and certainly any success, however real, only induces new difficulties, the opposition developing in equal measure. Again, whatever increases life may show, knowledge and ignorance, pleasure and pain, order and anarchy are ever in a constant ratio. The winds may always be tempered to the shorn lamb, but quite as truly the lamb in full fleece finds no lack of hostile winds. Life, then, or its history may exhibit a constant widening and deepening; in this sense there may be even more of it, and so it may be said to be progressive in respect to any of its supposed values; but also the opposing and equivalent increase makes it always the same life, the same by virtue of that constant ratio between what supports and what attacks it at any time, and so, making it thus always the same, gives it an over-historical character.

And, finally, if these two marks of that over-historical factor in all history for which I would contend in the interests at once of whole history and of a realistic and experimental idealism, seem somewhat intangible, being interesting possibly to speculative philosophy but not concrete enough for practical and positive history, there remains still the third mark, mentioned above, namely, the individual person. Whatever his time and generation, whatever his location and visible condition, in life and character the individual person is larger than any time or place or station and is a concrete fact without which no history has ever been either made or written. Personally, in other words,

² Oxford, 1908.

all men whatever they may be as Babylonians, Egyptians, Jews, or Greeks, as Romans or Germans, as Englishmen or Americans, are of one time and place and of one life. Personally they have that in their natures which makes them, great or small, superior to the differences either of geography or of history. In each one the whole lives and in the life of each the ideal needs no mediation but is immediately present and real. In different ways Plato, St. Paul, St. Augustine, Rousseau, and, strange to say, at least in the opinions of some, even Nietzsche, have all said this. In low estate or high the person is naturally and characteristically loyal not to the local and temporal and definitely visible, not to the formally established, the letter, but to the spirit, and the spirit once more, is over-historical. In history a time of personal self-assertion, of general individualism, is a time when, whether through a conscious fatalism or a conscious idealism, the eternal and universal is overwhelming the transitory and particular.

What is typically or characteristically true of the personal individual is conspicuous in the genius, the great man. Genius is whole. In it ideal and real, purpose and fate, future and present, are one. Sprung as it is from the fulness of life, not from any visible form or order, that is, as we say, born, not made, it is vital, large, free; it does not belong in any historical line; it makes history instead of being itself historical. As was said above, if history and civilization had lacked great men, its prophets and its martyrs, the case of purpose against fate would have little or nothing to rest upon and very much the same should be said of the case for the ideal against the real or for the whole against the part. Greatness has ever translated seeming fate into human purpose and has identified the immediately real with the ideal, the manifest part with the vital whole; and what greatness has done at special moments or periods and with notable achievement all individuals are forever hammering at.

In short individuality or personality is larger than any time or place or than any purpose, and being present and assertive in every period of history it makes history whole; it keeps the ideal present and real; it belies all evidence of external fate; it makes even history alive with something superhistorical.